



Improving Teacher Quality Federal Grant Program

This report provides a brief synopsis of the status of the 2005 Request for Proposals that is currently underway as part of the Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) Federal Grant Program. It also provides an update on other activities taking place in the program.

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The Commission advises the Governor and Legislature on higher education policy and fiscal issues. Its primary focus is to ensure that the state's educational resources are used effectively to provide Californians with postsecondary education opportunities. More information about the Commission is available at www.cpec.ca.gov.

Introduction

The Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) Federal Grant Program 2005 Request for Proposals (RFP) was released on May 18 and the application process is currently open. The 2005 RFP is targeted at academic literacy skills for high school teachers and students. Applications will be encouraged across subject matter areas, with particular attention to the needs of English Learners. The major goal of this initiative is to enable teachers to help their students develop academic literacy skills (e.g., critical reading/thinking/writing, strategies for understanding text book language, specific literacy techniques for specific content areas) to support high school success. A scientifically-based evaluation research component is included.

Request for proposals process

Initially, Commission staff proposed that the RFP be conducted in two phases: the first to solicit proposals for professional development projects serving teachers and their students; the second to solicit proposals for scientifically based research on the effects of those projects. After conversations with federal officials, it was decided to incorporate both elements into a single RFP so that each proposer must include both professional development and evaluation research within its scope of work.

Staff estimates that seven to ten professional development project grants will be funded for a three-year period, with the research portion extending through a fourth year. The maximum award per project will be \$1,000,000.

Nearly 3,400 copies of the RFP have been distributed by mail and the RFP may also be found on the CPEC web site.

In late May, ITQ staff conducted Technical Assistance Workshops in Long Beach, Fresno, and Hayward to provide information on the RFP to representatives from institutions of higher education, K-12 Local Educational Agencies, and others interested in preparing proposals for grants. Attendance at the meetings indicated strong interest, and many of the questions raised at those meetings and in individual contacts are being incorporated into a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page on the CPEC Web site.

The remainder of the process will be as follows:

1. The deadline for the Letter of Intent to apply for a grant is June 17; application forms will be distributed to those who file intent letters.
2. The deadline for submitting a full application is August 1.
3. Readers are currently being recruited and selected to read and evaluate the proposals.
4. Interviews with finalists will be conducted in one or two locations in California between September 6 and September 12.
5. Grant awards should be determined and announced around October 1, with work on the grants to begin as soon as documents can be prepared and grantees are able to proceed.

Grants for professional development activities will end on September 30, 2008; grantees will have until September 30, 2009, to complete the evaluation research portion of the grant.

Other ITQ activities

In early April, the program administrator attended the annual ESEA Title II State Coordinators National Workshop conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in Washington, D.C. Bill Vasey, Director of the Professional Development Division of the California Department of Education, who is responsible for the K-12 portion of the Title II program, also attended the sessions, as did over 100 post-secondary and K-12 administrators from other states.

The most notable information from the ED Workshop itself was a preview to Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings' announcement on April 8 regarding greater flexibility in the implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, particularly as it related to testing special education students. Although this primarily affects K-12 agencies, the implications of this change for ITQ teacher professional development grants should become clearer as the Secretary's initiative unfolds. Also announced was the Department's effort to update the non-regulatory guidance that helps CPEC and its grantees comply with federal law in implementing the ITQ program. New guidance is anticipated to be online within the next 60-90 days; the ITQ staff will make it available to all grantees and post it on the CPEC web site.

While in Washington, the program administrator had an opportunity to confer with key federal officials responsible for the program. These meetings provided further guidance on developing the RFP; as a result of these discussions, the RFP now combines the professional development and research components.

Other meetings held in Washington included separate discussions with legislative representatives for the Office of Governor Schwarzenegger, the University of California, the California State University, and the Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. In all cases, federal representatives were provided with information on the Commission's priorities, particularly accountability issues and the collection of a unique student identifier. There was considerable interest in these issues and the representatives indicated they would like to be kept abreast of CPEC's work on accountability.

The program administrator also attended a workshop hosted by the Professional Development Network of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO). The session provided valuable information about how other states operate their grant programs and identified sources of shared resources, including a form on which compliance with program requirements on the sharing of grant funds can be tracked. There was also some discussion of SHEEO's efforts to collect statewide data on program outcomes. Because the U.S. Department of Education no longer requires the submission of statewide program results, SHEEO has initiated the gathering of data on program outcomes. Work is continuing to refine the data instrument, improve data tracking by all states, and identify ways to report the outcomes on a national basis in order to demonstrate the impact of the Institutions of Higher Education-based competitive professional development grants -- a part of Title II Part A that may be at risk in the upcoming reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act.

On June 13-16, a field monitoring team from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Elementary and Secondary Education will visit California to review both the K-12 and the higher education portions of the Title II Part A program for teacher professional development. A verbal report on the visit will be provided at the Commission meeting.

ITQ staff is also commencing a strategic planning process to help prepare for future RFPs and to determine other long-range program requirements. Further information will be provided to the Commission as soon as this process can be developed.

A copy of the RFP follows this item.